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DE RUEHIN #1250/01 2940956  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 210956Z OCT 09  
FM AIT TAIPEI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2520  
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 9442  
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 0856

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 001250

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DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)  
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage October 21 on the controversy revolving around the Taiwan government's plan to impose energy taxes two years from now; on the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) that Taiwan is planning to sign with China; and on an unmanned aerial vehicle developed by the National Cheng Kung University. Almost all major Chinese-language papers reported on the speech by U.S. Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell at a seminar on Monday, in which he talked about the United States' commitments to Taiwan.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a column in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" discussed President Ma Ying-jeou's recent interview with Reuters, in which he said he would not exclude the possibility of meeting with Chinese President Hu Jintao. The article lambasted Ma and said Ma's scheme is to sell out Taiwan by fostering the island's unification with China. An editorial in the KMT-leaning, China-focused "Want Daily," however, said that the political dialogue between Ma and Hu is unavoidable and urged Ma to ponder how his administration can talk with China to serve Taiwan's best interests. An editorial in the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" discussed a recent report in Thursday's "Washington Times," which went nearly unnoticed by Taiwan's media and politicians, saying that the authority to approve sales of sensitive U.S. missiles and space technology has now been transferred from the White House to the Commerce Department. The article said the move "is widely expected to result in new sales of highly sensitive American technology that will help Beijing improve the accuracy and efficiency of its growing force of guided missiles." End summary.

A) "A Solemn Warning for Ma Ying-jeou!"

The "Free Talk" column in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 680,000] wrote (10/21):

"... Ma Ying-jeou claimed that 'there is no timetable' for his meeting with [Chinese President] Hu Jintao, in an attempt to diminish the Taiwan people's doubts and backlash. But in reality, his remark has all the more exposed his scheme to push for [Taiwan's] unification [with China], because no timetable can also mean that '[the meeting] can be held anytime;' as long as the KMT and the Chinese Communist Party believe they can effectively suppress the strong backlash from the Taiwan people, they will likely go right ahead to hold the meeting.

"Judging from Ma's impatience in wanting to sign an Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement with China, his move to toss off to China the united front topic of [negotiating] a peace agreement, and his constant flirting with China, it is obvious that Ma's thinking has been completely dominated by the ideology of 'China first.' As long as there is a way to foster ultimate unification, Ma will try his utmost to promote it, even to the extent of dreaming crazily of getting a Nobel Peace Prize award. ..."

B) "Political Dialogue between Ma Ying-jeou and Hu Jintao Is

Unavoidable"

The KMT-leaning, China-focused "Want Daily" [circulation: 10,000] editorialized (10/21):

"... On the other hand, when the Bush administration established the missile defense system in Europe in the name of coping with Iran, it was actually a move in concert with the eastward expansion of NATO to isolate Russia. The Obama administration has now renounced the plan to set up a missile defense system in Eastern Europe and has shifted its focus to Asia. Evidently [Washington's] move is aimed at the rise of China. Beijing surely will endure tremendous pressure, so it is in desperate need of peaceful and stable cross-Straits relations. Given all these factors, the various political issues concerning both sides of the Taiwan Strait have gradually emerged since early this year.

"Taipei's 'cold' attitude in dealing with Beijing's offer of rescue assistance in the wake of Typhoon Morakot, and the fact that it was Ma himself who approved the visit by the Dalai Lama to Taiwan to offer blessings [to the typhoon victims] have made Beijing all the more convinced of the necessity of political dialogue [across the Taiwan Strait]. [Beijing] hopes that both sides of the Taiwan Strait can reach some kind of political commitment during Ma's first term of office, which is at least sufficient to restrain the DPP, should it come back to power, from walking toward the road of Taiwan independence or from hindering cross-Straits stability.

"Beijing reportedly believes that with such a political guarantee, even if the DPP comes back to power and repudiates the policy made by the Ma administration, it will at least look like it is Taiwan that has gone back on its word, and should any conflicts happen between the two sides, Beijing will not be held responsible. In

other words, Beijing has prepared itself for the worst scenario just to force Taipei into having political dialogue. ... For the Ma administration, what it should be pondering now is not how to procrastinate on the cross-Straits political dialogue (including the Ma-Hu meeting), but how it can talk with Beijing so as to serve the best interests of Taiwan and in the meantime contribute to the peaceful rise of China. In this vein, Beijing is expected to respond [to Taiwan] with its best intentions."

C) "Missile Threat out of Washington?"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (10/21):

"Over the past two weeks, leaders of the opposition Democratic Progressive Party have made a huge cry over the growing threat caused by the ever-increasing number of missiles and high-technology weapons in Beijing's arsenal. ... For all of the noise they have been making and alarms they have been sounding, DPP politicians have completely missed the boat when it comes to raising public concern about the military threat from mainland China. That's because as things turned out, the gravest threat to our defense from Beijing's missiles has emerged not in Beijing, but in Washington. According to a report published in Thursday's Washington Times, U.S. President Barack Obama recently delegated the White House's authority to approve sales of sensitive U.S. missile and space technology to the Commerce Department. ...

"The move is widely expected to result in new sales of highly sensitive American technology that will help Beijing improve the accuracy and efficiency of its growing force of guided missiles. The Commerce Department has insisted that any proposed sales will be closely screened just as they were when authority was still with the White House. But the fact of the matter is that now that this power has been transferred to the Commerce Department, security experts and advisers working in the White House will no longer play a meaningful role in reviewing the sales. The Department of Commerce, which is more concerned with boosting U.S. exports and creating jobs, will take over the task of evaluating whether such sales would improve Beijing's military capabilities. Taiwan's security is not a major issue in this department. ...

"In Taipei, the Ministry of Defense should explain whether the government here was ever consulted by Washington about this

important decision affecting our national security. It is the job of the military attach to our de facto embassy in Washington to keep an eye on this kind of development and ensure that our opinions are heard. If we were consulted about the decision and President Obama made it in spite of our recommendations, then there is nothing more the government here could have done. ... But for all of the connections they boast of having in Washington, including a top-notch pro-Taiwan independence lobbying organization, the DPP has failed to warn the public about the great danger associated with reopening U.S. sales of sensitive missile and space technologies to mainland China. Indeed, this important policy change only came to light after it appeared in a single American newspaper. Now that the decision has been made, it is highly unlikely that anything Taiwan has to say can put this cat back into the bag."

STANTON